
The URC Youth Framework

“Our mission is to discover God, to help each other grow in the Christian Faith, and through our lives reflect God’s love to all.”

The URC Youth Mission Statement

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Purpose and Scope

This document contains the Framework of the United Reformed Church Youth. It is owned by the United Reformed Church Children's and Youth Work Committee, to whom the URC Youth Assembly and URC Youth Executive are accountable. The Children's and Youth Work Committee may amend the Framework should it be deemed to be necessary. This is the top line guide which will act as a guide to the Youth Assembly and Youth Executive as to what is within their remit and authority. This document should be read in line with the URC Youth Handbook, which is owned by the URC Youth Assembly, and the URC Youth Assembly Standing Orders.

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Introduction

A brief history

The youth of The United Reformed Church, formerly termed 'FURY' (Fellowship of the United Reformed Youth), has a long and precious history. Its earliest origins lay in the respective youth organisations of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches prior to their union in 1972, and the first FURY Chair was in post in 1973. A great number of URC members were involved in FURY, in so many different ways, whilst aged between 11 and 25, and the importance of community among young people (at local, Synod and Assembly level) in the URC endures to this day.

In 2005 significant changes to the structures of FURY were made, with FURY Council becoming FURY Advisory Board (FAB) and the FURY Chair becoming FURY Moderator. However, following the Children's and Youth Department restructuring from 2012 to 2013, the opportunity to review the FURY structures arose once again. In light of this opportunity, whilst undergoing consultation and much prayerful consideration the following paper set out in as much detail as is possible the operational guidelines for the activities of the United Reformed Church Youth at an Assembly level. It was first adopted by FURY Advisory Board, acting on behalf of the URC Youth Assembly, at its September meeting of 2015.

The Children's and Youth Work Committee, in light of its mandate set by the URC General Assembly, has the responsibility to take important decisions about the framework of the URC Youth structures. That framework is laid out in this document, which was first adopted at the September Children's and Youth Work Committee meeting of 2015. It was at this same meeting that the name change detailed below was adopted. It will be up to the URC Youth Assembly, however, to make the decisions about the full operational details of the URC Youth. The URC Youth Assembly, or the URC Youth Executive acting on its behalf, will be free to review and revise these guidelines as it sees fit, so long as it does so within the boundaries set out by the framework which has been adopted on behalf of the young people of the URC.

What's in a name?

The term 'FURY' was used for around forty years, and it is no wonder that in time it has become associated with many positives - community, fellowship, the collective term for the young people of the URC. However, notwithstanding the emotional tie to the term felt by many of those historically involved, the consensus around the country among those working at a Synod or Assembly level was that this term became increasingly less well known among the young people currently aged 11-25 who are associated with the URC. Sadly, this has meant that the term 'FURY' has ceased to fulfil its purpose and, unfortunately, has even been exclusive to some.

So, the term 'United Reformed Church Youth' instead of 'FURY', is adopted with the full intention that all the positive things that FURY has been, and has described, will continue - but for an even wider group of current young people in the URC.

For the avoidance of doubt:

'United Reformed Church Youth' now supersedes 'FURY' in referring to all URC activities at an Assembly and Synod level which relate to young people aged 11 to 25. 'URC Youth' shall also be used to describe all those young people who have some affiliation or connection with a local URC. It is hoped that local churches will continue to use 'FURY' as the name of their youth group, Sunday youth provision, etc, where applicable. Whilst it may be tempting to shorten 'URC Youth' to 'URCY', there is a danger that in doing so those who are unaware of this acronym being excluded and so this should be avoided, both verbally and in writing.

The Framework

The Framework should be read in conjunction with the URC Youth Assembly Standing Orders and the URC Youth Handbook.

The United Reformed Church Youth Assembly

Purpose

The United Reformed Church Youth Assembly (Youth Assembly) is a primary gathering within each year for the URC. It shall be both an Assembly (the conduct of worship and business) and an event (the conduct of fellowship and learning), open to all young people from school years 10/S3 up to the age of 25, inclusive, connected in some way to the United Reformed Church.

Planning

The Children's and Youth Work Office, in conjunction with the Youth Executive, shall be responsible for the planning and preparation of Youth Assembly. The role of the Youth Executive shall be to give general direction, and to be as involved in both the planning and delivery of the Youth Assembly as possible. The role of the Children's and Youth Work Office will be to give administrative support in every aspect, and where necessary to facilitate the Youth Executive's planning. The Children's and Youth Work Committee will support both the Youth Executive and the Children's and Youth Work Office in fulfilling their respective roles.

Practicalities

The Youth Assembly is accountable through the Children's and Youth Work Committee within the structure of the URC. The Youth Executive thus sits in an analogous relationship to the Youth Assembly as the Mission Council sits in relation to the URC General Assembly.

The Standing Orders of the Youth Assembly shall be based on those adopted for use by the URC General Assembly, with some modifications which reflect the nature of the Youth Assembly.

The United Reformed Church Youth Executive

Purpose

The purpose of the United Reformed Church Youth Executive (Youth Executive) is twofold:

- i) to provide youth representation throughout the URC and to represent URC Youth outside of the URC, and
- ii) to carry out the work of the URC Youth Assembly. This will include assisting in the planning of Assembly-level URC Youth events, carrying out the work of the URC Youth Assembly passed by resolution, and ensuring any necessary work to support the URC Youth structures is completed.

The Youth Executive should also seek to inspire young people in pursuing their relationship with God, in playing an active part in the Church, and in joining in the mission of the Church. Where possible, the Youth Executive should also support and encourage the Church at a local and Synod level in doing the same.

Constitution

The Youth Executive shall be made up partly of members elected at the Youth Assembly and partly of representatives appointed by each Synod. Those standing for election for or seeking appointment to the Youth Executive must be aged 16 - 25 (inclusive) for the entirety of their term of office, and must be able and willing to make the Induction Vows in good conscience (see below).

Elected members:

- Youth Assembly Moderator
- Youth Assembly Moderator Elect (two year term, one spent as Moderator Elect, and following induction at the next year's Youth Assembly, one year spent as Moderator)
- Youth Assembly Mission Council and General Assembly Representative (two year term)

Appointed Members:

- 13 Synod nominees to be representative of their Synods (two year term)
- Pilots Representative (two year term - appointed by the Pilots Executive)

Co-opted Members:

- If necessary, to a maximum of four

Ex officio:

- Christian Aid / Commitment for Life Intern (one year term)
- Youth Executive Chaplain (one year term; invited by the Youth Assembly Moderator)
- Clerk to YA

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- Head of Children's and Youth Work Development
 - A Children's and Youth Development Officer

If the need for other Co-opted Appointed Members should arise, a clear role description identifying the responsibilities anticipated must be written in advance of any individual being approached to consider the role. Co-opted members are invited to join the Youth Executive to meet a specific need over a time-bound period.

Practicalities

The Youth Executive is constituted such that it exists as the executive body to the Youth Assembly; the relationship between these two councils should be considered analogous with that of Mission Council and General Assembly.

The Youth Executive shall meet at regular times throughout the year. In extraordinary circumstances, it may be necessary for additional meetings to be called.

Where resolutions are passed at Youth Assembly, it is the responsibility of the Youth Executive to ensure this work is completed by the relevant body.

Code of Conduct

Members of the Youth Executive shall be expected to honour the Youth Executive Code of Conduct (see below).

Role descriptions

All Youth Executive members will have a clear role description setting out their responsibilities, to whom they are responsible and the support they can expect to receive. A Youth Executive member who is unable to fulfil their responsibilities in line with their role description, without the ongoing agreement of the Moderator, may have to resign.

The age restriction for Youth Executive members, who must be 16-25 years inclusive for the entirety of their term of office, exists in order to safeguard those who are younger than 16, due to the amount of travel and nature of the work undertaken by the Youth Executive, and to ensure that those serving on Youth Executive are not outside the URC Youth age range.

Youth Executive members will normally serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms of office (each of two years in length, or a total of four consecutive years).

Induction Vows

All Youth Executive Members, called to serve the United Reformed Church by God, are required to make the following vows before taking up office:

URC Youth Assembly Moderator and Members of the URC Youth Executive, in light of the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church and understanding the role to which you have been called, do you confess anew your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

We do

In dependence on God's grace, do you reaffirm your trust in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord, and your promise to follow and to seek and to obey his will all the days of your life?

We do

Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

We do

Synod Youth Representatives

The Children's and Youth Work Committee value the principles of conciliarity and equal representation within the URC. It is for this reason that each Synod is invited, and strongly encouraged, to appoint a representative to the URC Youth Executive so that information can be effectively communicated in both directions.

Youth Executive Code of Conduct

This guidance sets down the expectations of members of the URC Youth Executive.

The conduct of the Youth Executive members is built on the fundamental ethos of the URC Youth, as set out in the Mission Statement:

“Our mission is to discover God, to help each other grow in the Christian Faith, and through our lives reflect God's love to all.”

Youth Executive members are called to be advocates on behalf of, role models to, and ambassadors for, URC Youth.

When accepting a position on the Youth Executive, the member takes on the responsibility of upholding the URC Youth Mission Statement and accepts that their actions are accountable to the Youth Assembly and before God.

Guidance:

- ◆ Keep God in mind in everything you do and strive for a Christ like attitude at all times.
- ◆ Respect all staff and fellow participants, showing an understanding of others' feelings, beliefs and opinions.
- ◆ Challenge the issue, not the person.
- ◆ Encourage participation at all times.
- ◆ Be inclusive at all times and consider the welfare of others.
- ◆ Communicate well: listen to others and think before you speak.
- ◆ Take responsibility for our own actions.

Things to remember:

- ◆ Do treat everyone equally and with respect
- ◆ Do model the behaviour you wish others to follow
- ◆ Do respect others' right to personal privacy
- ◆ Do provide and maintain an atmosphere / environment conducive for the sharing of concerns
- ◆ Do encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes they do not like
- ◆ Do remember that all Youth Executive Members are in a position of trust and should avoid situations that compromise their integrity
- ◆ Do remember that someone else might misinterpret your words or actions

- ◆ Do not have any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others
- ◆ Do not jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- ◆ Do not make suggestive gestures or remarks, even in fun
- ◆ Do not let suspicion, disclosure or allegation of abuse go unrecorded or unreported
- ◆ Do not rely on just your good name to protect you
- ◆ Do not believe "it could never happen to me"

In the event that a member of the Youth Executive struggles to follow these guidelines, care and support will be offered by the Moderators, Head of Children's and Youth Work Development and / or the Children's and Youth Work Development Officer. If the member is a Synod Representative, appropriate consultation with the relevant Synod will be necessary. If care and support does not bring positive resolution, it may be necessary for the member to stand down from their role. If there is disagreement between the member and those providing the support, consultation with the officers of the Children's and Youth Work Committee should be made. If the member ultimately feels that they have been treated unfairly, recourse should be made to the Deputy General Secretary - Discipleship of the United Reformed Church.

Inclusion

The United Reformed Church Youth shall strive to be an inclusive group, putting into place all that is within our means to achieve this as fully as possible. The URC Youth will

recognise that seeking to become more inclusive is an ongoing journey, which will continue into the future.

Partnerships

The Youth Assembly will be in order to request that consideration is given to whether the URC Youth might become a partner of another organisation or body. The URC Youth Executive and Children's and Youth Work Committee will then work together within the parameters set out in The Handbook regarding partnerships.

Communications

The URC Youth should seek to communicate effectively and appropriately with all young people engaging with the United Reformed Church.